


Serial No.: 09/683,380
Attorney Docket No.: F-441

Patent

Amendment To The Claims

Please amend claims 1 - 7 as follows and add new claims 8-17:

 {e1} 1. (currently amended) A system of incoming mail receptacles for detecting hazards in a mail piece comprising:

a plurality of incoming mail receptacles each including a contaminant detection hazard detector, a communications system, and a source detection system for providing suspect source information when a hazard is detected; and

a server connected to the plurality of incoming mail receptacles for receiving suspect source data and communicating the suspect source data to the incoming mail receptacles.

{e2} 2. (currently amended) The system of claim 1 further comprising:

a secure network connection between each incoming mail receptacle and the server.

{e3} 3. (currently amended) The system of claim 1 further comprising: an image scanner for scanning the face of a mail piece piece.

{e4} 4. (currently amended) A method for coordinated hazard detection in a mail system having a plurality of incoming mail receptacles with hazard detection systems connected to a central server comprising:

detecting the presence of a mail piece;

detecting the source information relating to the of a mail piece;

testing the mail piece for hazards to determine an initial mail piece quarantine condition; and

alerting the central server upon detection of a hazard and providing source information to the central server.

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[65] 5. (currently amended) The method system of claim 4 wherein the source detection includes detecting a meter serial number.

[66] 6. (currently amended) The method system of claim 4 wherein the source detection includes detecting a return address.

[67] 7. (currently amended) The method system of claim 4 wherein the source detection includes detecting a handwriting sample.

8. (New) The method of claim 4 further comprising:
providing hazard information to the central server.

9. (New) The method of claim 4 further comprising:
alerting a response team to the hazard condition.

10. (New) The method of claim 4 further comprising:
sealing the incoming mail receptacle if a hazard is detected.

11. (New) The method of claim 4 further comprising:
redistributing the source information from the server to at least one incoming mail receptacle.

12. (New) The method of claim 4 further comprising:
distributing source exclusion information from the server to at least one incoming mail receptacle based upon the source information received at the server.

13. (New) The system of claim 1 wherein the source information comprises a meter number.

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14. (New) The system of claim 1 wherein the source information comprises a scan image.

15. (New) The system of claim 1 wherein the source information comprises OCR data.

16. (New) The system of claim 1 wherein the source information comprises a handwriting signature.

17. (New) The system of claim 1 wherein the contamination detector hazard detector comprises:

 a segregated incoming mail air sampler for collecting an air sample having an incoming mail opening and a lockable door for the opening;

a mail piece transport system for feeding the mail piece through the sampler;

a movable surface for applying force to an edge of the mail piece to form a pillow deformation in the mail piece;

a flattener for flattening the pillow deformation to collect the air sample;

a hazard detector to test the air sample and for providing a hazard indication;

and

a transport mechanism for moving the mail piece from the air sampler into a collection chamber if no hazard is detected.